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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

### EGOISM

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS is of two kinds : one is ripe and the other unripe. 'Nothing is mine, whatever I see, feel or hear, —nay even this body itself is not mine. I am always eternal, free and all knowing',—such consciousness as this originates in the ripe ego; while the unripe ego makes man feel himself for ever related to the transitory things of the world. 'This is my house, this is my child, this is my wife'—consciousness like this is the manifestation of the unripe ego.

EGOISM is like a cloud, that keeps God hidden from our sight. If by the mercy of the Guru egoism vanishes, God is seen in His full glory. As for instance, you see in the picture that Sree Ramachandra, who is God, is only two or three steps ahead of Lakshman (the Jiva), but Sita (Maya) coming in between the two, prevents Lakshman from having a view of Rama.

If I hold up this cloth before me you won't see me any more though I shall be so near you. So also, though God is nearer to you than anything else, yet for

the screen of egoism you cannot see Him.

THE true nature of Jiva is eternal Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. It is Egoism that has brought about so many *upadhis* (binding adjuncts), and he has quite forgotten his own nature.

THE nature of the Jiva changes with the addition of each *upadhi*. When a man dresses like a fop, wearing the fine black-bordered muslin, the love songs of Nidhu Babu spring to his lips. A pair of English boots inflates even a languishing person with a vain delight,—he immediately begins to whistle, and if he has to ascend a flight of stairs, he leaps up from one step to another like a Saheb. If a man holds a pen in his hand, he will go on scratching carelessly on any paper he can lay hold of.

MONEY is an *upadhi* of a very strong nature. As soon as a man becomes rich he is thoroughly changed.

A Brahman who was very meek and humble used to come here (meaning himself) every now and then. After some

time he stopped coming and we knew nothing about what had happened to him. One day we went over to Konnagore in a boat. As we were getting down from the boat we saw the Brahman sitting on the bank of the Ganges where, in the fashion of big folks, he was enjoying the pure air of the river. On seeing me he accosted me in a patronising tone with

the words, "Halloo Thacoor! How are you doing now?" I at once noticed the change in his tone and said to Hriday who was with me, "I tell you Hriday, this man must have come by some riches? Do you see what a great change has come over him?" Hriday burst into a loud laugh.

## THE IMMANENT GOD

"**I**F God is not in His world, we need not look for Him anywhere else. Indeed there is nowhere else to look." This effectually clears our consciousness of the conception of an extra-cosmic Deity.

If He is extra-cosmic, He is not infinite, therefore no God.

"If God is in the planet, He must be in the atom."

If not, He is not omnipresent. Now comes the interesting question. Is the atom something less than God, or more than He? In other words, is the atom an undeveloped God, or a compound,—God *plus* something?

If the atom is God undeveloped, it is a part of God. Because it cannot be the whole. God therefore consists of parts of varying development. Acceptance of this proposition is tantamount to the admission of modification and death of the constitution of the Deity.

If the atom is something different from God, pervaded and vitalised by His presence, God's infinitude or omnipresence is cut short. The atom being different from God limits God. God not being the atom is not present in the attributes

which constitute the *atomness* of the atom. If He were, He would not be different from the atom.

Both positions are untenable. We can neither conceive a developing God, nor a finite God, without doing violence to Godhood.

Nor do we fare better under the supposition of a growing class of scientists and evolutionists that God is the unknown absolute unity of which the subjective and objective worlds are but aspects.

To hold that these aspects are causally related to the unknown absolute unity, is to admit change in it, which, whatever else it may make of the unknown, unmakes it as God.

For while becoming a cause the unknown had to be what it was not before, that is, undergo a change. A change is an effect, a link in the beginning-and-endless causal chain. The effect that made the unknown a cause had a cause, which in its turn must have been an effect, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Thus if the occurrence of change is admitted in the unknown, it becomes an effect, a changeful state, a link in the beginning-and-



endless causal chain.

There again the agency that caused the change in the unknown, which made the latter a cause must be conceived either as inherent in the unknown or outside of it. If inherent, the change must have been due to some internal necessity in the unknown; if outside, the unknown must have been a dependent factor, influenced by and acting under pressure.

That which is subject to change, that is necessity or influence, cannot be God.

The alternative lies between pure materialism and the *Mâyâ* theory, the theory of illusion, the theory which says we do not know anything about the origin of the universe. For we cannot with our intellect know how it is possible for the unknown absolute to have caused the subjective and objective worlds without killing itself in the attempt. We have to decide between the absolute and the universe. If we decide for the former, this show of the universe must be an illusion, not in any way related to the unknown.

Our intellect falls within the universe of illusion as an effect of some cause. The effect cannot transcend its cause. So we can never with the intellect solve this ultimate question.

The unknown absolute unity is the only reality. So long as one functions in the universe of illusion, for him the reality is non-existent. For in unity co-existence of duality could not be perceived even by mistake. A rope seen in the dark is not perceived as half-snake and half-rope, but either as snake or rope.

It can very pertinently be asked, Why

trouble about a thing which can never be known by the intellect, and so be never known by man?

Certainly nothing could have been better than this conclusion if it were only possible not to trouble. That the religious instinct, or in other words, the craving of the finite for the infinite, is deeper than all other cravings of the human heart, is the unqualified testimony of the history of the human race. It is foolish to attempt shirking the inevitable.

Impelled by this craving, men in every age and country have been known to rise to a state of consciousness beyond the body and the senses, where the only reality shines in its own splendour and the universe of subject and object, the universe of time, space and causation with all its belongings is missed, as the mirage, the snake, the ghost and the silver are missed on closer approach to the desert, the rope, the stump and the mother-of-pearl respectively.

Is it right to throw away this universal testimony as unreliable without a fair trial to verify it in one's own consciousness?

Evidently not. Since dream consciousness and awaking consciousness furnish conflicting experiences—and since so many dreams have been known in all ages and countries to have proved true—what is matter of course in dream, being utterly impossible in the awakened state, it is not impossible that there should be a state in which man may become the Unknowable and be forever freed from fear arising out of duality.

## LEAVES FROM THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

( *According to M.* )

## CHAPTER II

## MASTER AND DISCIPLE

**M**'S second visit to the Master was one morning, at about eight. He was going to be shaved by the barber. The winter cold was still lingering and He had on a moleskin shawl hemmed with red muslin. On seeing M. the Master said, "Well, you are come. Very good. Take your seat here."

It was on the southern verandah leading to His room that the meeting took place. Seated before the barber he had a pair of slippers on and the shawl described above. He talked to M. while the barber was attending to Him. His face was, as usual, smiling. Only He stammered a little, while talking.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.) :—Where is your home ?

M. :—In Calcutta, Sir.

Sri Ramakrishna :—Where have you been staying here ?

M. :—Sir, I am staying with my sister at Baranagore—at Ishan Kaviraja's house.

Sri Ramakrishna :—I see, you are staying at Ishan's.

## KESHAB CHANDER SEN

Do you know how Keshab has been doing at present ? I heard he was seriously ill.

M. :—Yes Sir, I too heard the same. Perhaps he is doing well now.

Sri Ramakrishna :—I vowed to offer green cocoanut and sugar to the Divine Mother for Keshab's recovery. I would sometimes wake up in the midst of my sleep at night and cry to Mother praying, 'O Mother, do cure Keshab's disease. If Keshab does not live, whom shall I talk to when I shall come to Calcutta ?'

Do you know there has been recently in Calcutta one Mr. Cook ? Has he been delivering lectures ? Keshab took me on board a steamer the other day and the Saheb was there.

M. :—Yes Sir, I have heard about him but I have never had any occasion to hear him speak. Nor do I know much about him.

THE DUTIES OF A HOUSEHOLDER  
AND FATHER

Sri Ramakrishna :—Pratap's brother came to me and stopped here for a few days. He said he had come here to stay. I was told that he had no work to do, and that he had left his wife and children in the care of his father-in-law. I took him to task for his want of self-respect. Don't you think it wrong of him to go about like this when he has lots of children to bring up ? Should a stranger come to feed and look after them ? I wonder he is not ashamed that somebody else is taking care of his family,—that his father-in-law should be asked to bear



his burden. I rated him severely and told him to look about for work. It was when he was thus pointed out his folly that he left here.

M. :—I see, Sir.

### CHAPTER III.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.):— Are you married?

M. :—Yes, Sir.

#### THE MASTER REPREHENDS M. AND CRUSHES HIS EGOTISM

Sri Ramakrishna (starting at the words of M., to Ram Lal, His nephew):—Ah me! What a great pity, Ram Lal, that he should have got married!

M. got confused at these words of the Master and sat speechless like one guilty of a serious offence. He thought within himself, "Must then marrying be so bad?"

Master :—Are there any children born to you?

M. could hear the beating of his heart. He answered in a feeble voice, "Yes, Sir."

He felt a terrible blow was dealt at his egotism. After a while the Master again looked kindly upon M. and said in an affectionate tone, "You see, my boy, there are some good signs about you. I can know them by looking at one's eyes and brow. Your eyes are very good. Well, now your wife,—what do you think of her? Is she a *vidyasakti* (of a divine nature leading godward and to light) or an *avidyasakti* (the reverse, leading only to darkness)?"

#### WHAT IS TRUE KNOWLEDGE?

M. :—She is good, but ignorant.

Sri Ramakrishna (disapprovingly):— She is ignorant and you are wise! You think you have attained wisdom. Do you?

M. did not know what wisdom and

ignorance truly consisted in. His idea was that one could become wise by reading books only. This false notion was of course afterwards removed and he then came to know that knowing God alone is true wisdom and not knowing Him is ignorance. When the Master said, "Do you think you have attained wisdom?" M.'s egotism received a second blow.

#### IMAGE-WORSHIP

Sri Ramakrishna :—Do you believe in God with form or without form?

This question again made M. look confused and set him thinking. Is it possible that one could have faith in Formless God and believe at the same time that He has a form? Or how can it be that believing Him to be with form, one could think that He is formless? Can two contradictory attributes co-exist in the same thing? Can white things like milk be black also at the same time?

After thinking for a while like this M. said, "I should like to meditate upon God as the Formless Being rather than as a Being with forms."

Sri Ramakrishna :—That's good. There is no harm looking at Him from this or the other point of view. Yes, to think of Him as the Formless Being is quite right. But don't you run away with the idea that that alone is true, all else is false. Meditating upon Him as a Being with forms is equally right. But you must stick to your particular point of view.

M. got confused to hear again and again from the lips of the Master that contradictories are true of God. He had never come across such a strange thing in his books and to these all his learning was confined. His egotism

received another blow but was not yet completely knocked down. So he went on arguing a little with the Master.

M. :—Please Sir, one may believe that God is with form. But He is not surely the earthen images that are worshipped.

Sri Ramakrishna :—My dear sir, why call it an earthen image? I mean the Image Divine made of the Spirit.

M. could not follow this. He went on saying: “Is it not Sir, one’s duty to make it clear to those who worship images that God is not the same as the images they worship and that in the act of worshipping they should keep God Himself in view and not the clay images?”

#### PUBLIC LECTURES AND

#### SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Sri Ramakrishna(disgustedly):—It has grown to be a fashion with you Calcutta people to think only of ‘lecturing’ and bringing others to light! How are you going, pray, to bring light to your own selves? Eh? Who are you to teach others? The Lord of the universe will teach mankind if need be—the Lord who has made the sun, the moon, men and brutes, has made things for them to live upon, parents to tend and rear them,—who has done so many things, will He not do something to bring them to light? Surely, He will, if need be. He lives in the temple of the human body. He knows our inmost thoughts. If there is anything wrong in image worship, doesn’t He know that all the worship is meant for Him? He will be pleased to accept the worship knowing that it is meant for Him. Why must you worry yourself about things beyond your reach? Try to know and revere God. That is the duty nearest you,

M’s egotism was, it might be supposed, now completely crushed. He thought, “It is indeed perfectly true what this God-man is saying. What business have I to go about preaching to others? Have I known God myself? Have I got Divine Love? It is, as the proverb has it, like bidding my friend Sankara lie down on my bed when there is no bed to lie down upon even for my own self! I do not know anything about God. It is the height of folly and meanness itself—of which I should be ashamed—to think of teaching others! It is not mathematics, history or literature to be taught in the present case! It is the science of God! Yes, the words of this holy man do fully appeal to me.”

This was the first attempt on the part of M. at arguing a point with the Master and happily the last.

Sri Ramakrishna :—You were talking of images made of clay. Well, there often becomes a necessity of worshipping even such images. It is God Himself who has provided these various forms of worship. The Master of the universe has done all this—to suit different men in different stages of knowledge. The mother so arranges the food for her children that every one gets what agrees with him. Suppose a mother has five children. Having got a fish to cook, she makes different dishes out of it. Thus she can give each one of her children what suits him exactly. One gets the rich *polow* with the fish, while she gives only a little soup to another who is of weak digestion; she makes fish with the sour tamarind for the third, fried fish for the fourth and so on. Exactly as it agrees with the stomach. Do you see this?

M :—Yes, Sir, now I do.



## SATVA AND THE FINE ARTS

**I**N a temple, seated on the floor before the Image, a man was singing a song without the least regard to time or tune. The priest who had a good musical ear was nettled at this. "What do you mean by crying like this?" said he gruffly. "Why? I am singing a song to the Lord. I want to please Him alone, and do not care for what a man may think of it," was the angry reply. "To please the Lord!" said the priest sarcastically, "Is He a greater fool than myself?"

The priest, though in a fit of passion unwittingly struck a note of profound meaning. Persons capable of pleasing the Lord must partake of His nature, that is, the *satva* will be preponderant in them. Their conduct must, in every case, be the manifestation of *satva*. Illumination of the senses of perception is, according to the Scriptures, the true indication of *satva*. The Lord says in the Gita: "When intelligence is seen to shine through all the avenues of this body then it is to be known that *satva* is preponderant." (Chap. xiv. 11.) Both Sankara and Ramanuja understand the senses of perception by the avenues of the body. Intelligence, which is the only means of right perception of things is the natural possession of the *satvic*,—intelligence not limited to one particular sense, but extending to all the senses of perception, making them capable of detecting at once the merits and defects of things presented to them.

Here the question presents itself as to whether there is any fixed standard of judging things. It is of course a fact that different people have different standards of judgment. But these different standards are determined by the prevailing *gunas* in them. All persons

in whom the *tamas* is the strongest will have before them the same 'ideal,' which every one of them will, by a constitutional necessity, aspire after. In this case the greatest blessing would be to lie immersed in sense gratification. Persons having the *rajas* developed in them to the same extent will long for the realisation of the same state of life, *viz.* incessant activity. So the *satvic* too have their own ideal. But as *satva* leads man nearer to the Reality than the other *gunas*, the fixed standard of judgment is, from the stand-point of men who believe in the Reality, the highest idea of good conceived by men in whom the *satva* has reached its highest perfection.

Whatever tends to hide from a man's view his own ideal (be it *satvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*) is repugnant to him and he thinks it bad. Whatever, on the other hand, harmonises with the ideal or helps to bring it out into greater prominence, is good. In this way have all things which man uses out of necessity or for pleasure been classed under the three heads of *satvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*, according as they suit the tastes of, and by exercise or indulgence deepen them in, the *satvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* persons respectively.

It is not within the scope of this article to dwell, in detail, on things that are *satvic*. But the general principle on which the classification is based may be briefly noted here.

We read in the Gita: Such pleasures as are like poison at first but are like nectar in the end are *satvic*," (Chap. xviii. 37). The meaning is that things which are enjoyable only by trained minds are *satvic*. *Tamasic* pleasures of which the type is the sexual, do not depend upon any previous training. They spring at once from the contact of the senses with





## CHRISTIAN VEGETARIANISM

*( Concluded from page 9 )*

**L**ET us now examine the assertion that a golden age of peace and harmony can be brought about through man's abstaining from eating flesh and inflicting cruelty to animals. It may be well first to turn our attention to the actual condition of things before drawing fanciful pictures of the future. We are forced to observe that innumerable animals not used as food are destroyed through sheer necessity. Besides these, creatures such as rats, mice, &c., and domestic animals and pets, when they become too numerous, are deprived of life. Others destructive to farmer's crops meet the same fate. In short, the only animals spared from death by man are those that in some way contribute to his pleasure or service. The life of the beast of burden, though not taken, is not one of joy and peace but of slavery meaning often the greatest hardship and misery.

Horses replaced by electricity or other agencies in the West are not kept when no longer useful. What consideration then can be hoped for other beasts when so little is shown to the horse so intimately interwoven with the interest of man, his traditions, his history, his glory, immortalized in prose and verse—the noble animal from whose name are derived *cavalier*, *caballero*, *chevalier*, *chivalry*! In view of this it is safe to state that if the animals now used for food were no longer desired for that

purpose they would still be killed as they trespassed upon man's sphere of egoism.

Turning our eyes towards humanity we see the stronger races exploit and crush out the weaker. In North America, the Indians have rapidly dwindled in numbers, the remaining tribes kept on isolated reservations, surrounded by their conquerors whose contact has proved so deadly. The aboriginal of Australia is forced back and his hunting-ground taken by the invader. The Maoris of New Zealand are meeting a similar fate. The American Civil War lasting four years, emancipated the slaves but their freedom was gained at the cost of the best blood of the South.

The rise of one nation is heralded by the fall of another. Imperial Germany is built on the ruins of imperial France. America becomes a world power as Spain loses her colonies.

Nations may disarm and settle their disputes by arbitration but the war of commercialism will be no less disastrous to the weaker nations than the clash of arms. The commercial expansion of the United States brings her wealth as it decreases the wealth of other countries. Her colossal steel trust does good through the cheapening of production and the increase of export but it means equally evil to manufactories extinguished with thousands of people thrown out of employment, and other nations made to lose

trade. In countries where civilization has reached the highest pitch, the struggle for existence is the sternest, the rivalry between communities and between individuals the keenest, the nervous friction the most intense, the strain the severest. Everywhere throughout nature this conflict expresses itself in selection and rejection. Cessation of the struggle means retrogradation, stagnation, death. In India competition is restricted by the caste system, but it is now under discussion whether this interference with free competition has not caused more evil than good.

For obvious reasons vegetarians have ignored the rights of plant life in their scheme for establishing peace and harmony on earth. Yet plants also merit recognition as may be seen from the following quotations.

"If, on the one hand, animals show avidity in their search after nourishment as well as power of discrimination in the selection of it, roots of plants may, on the other hand, be observed to direct themselves towards the side where the soil contains most nourishment, nay, even to seek out the smallest crevices in rocks which may contain any food. If we twist a bough so as to make the upper surface of its leaves the under one, these leaves will even twist their stems in order to regain the position best suited for the exercise of their functions (*i. e.* so as to have the smooth side uppermost). Is it quite certain that this takes place unconsciously?"—*Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles*.

"Of all apparently voluntary movements of plants, the direction of their boughs and of the upper surface of their leaves towards the light and towards

moist heat, and the twining movements of creepers round their supports, are the most universal. In this last phenomenon especially there is something which resembles animal movements. While growing, creepers, it is true, if left to themselves, describe circles with their tips and by this means reach an object near at hand. But it is no merely mechanical cause that induces them to adapt their growth to the form of the object they have thus reached. The *Coscuta* does not twine round every kind of support: for instance, limbs of animals, dead vegetable matter, metals and inorganic substances are not used for this purpose, but only living plants, and not even all kinds—not mosses, for instance—only those from which it can extract nourishment by its *papillæ*."—*Phænomena and Laws of Organic Life* by Treviranus.

"Now, although plants also have no consciousness of the outer world, and although the mere analogue of a consciousness which exists in them must, on the contrary, be conceived as a dull self-enjoyment, yet we see that they all seek light, and that many of them turn their flowers or leaves daily towards the sun, while creepers find their way to supports with which they are not in contact; and finally we see individual kinds of plants show even a sort of irritability."—Schopenhauer's *Will in Nature*.

More certain than any evidence of will deducible from the movements of plants is their desire for life; for that desire has brought them into existence, and their form is but that desire objectified. It is therefore undeniable that in destroying plants, we thwart their purpose which they so eagerly struggle for.



Thus we cannot escape the conclusion that man's life on earth is impossible without causing death and suffering. Our life can only be maintained by taking the life of other beings (animals and plants) no less eager for life than we. From this it follows that physical existence itself is sin. For all the woe and misery in the world are caused by the egoistic desire for existence. How this desire originated is a mystery the intellect will never solve.

Some Christians try to explain evil by the hypothesis that man was in the beginning pure and sinless, "created in the image of God" and that through his fall all creation became degraded. They thus trace evil to man, and there abruptly stop, making him a first cause. If man was once sinless, his fall must have been due to some change in his nature, and this requires a cause, *i.e.*, the change preceding it, and that again another, and so on *ad infinitum*. People putting forth such childish theories about the origin of evil have evidently never taken the trouble to study philosophy.

However, desire being the cause of all evil it follows that evil can only be extinguished by the total extinction of desire. This denial of the desire for life, renunciation, is the beginning of religion. Religion consists not in giving one's assent to some belief or going to church once a week and listening to a sermon. Religion is not proclaiming Christ the only incarnation of God, nor in upholding his virtues and teachings as superior to all others,—none of these constitute religion; but to practise the renunciation of the world taught by the Master and to live the life he lived. This is true

Christianity; the rest is non-essential.

He who sees the world as mere bondage, from which he is determined to free himself, will naturally avoid doing anything tending merely to strengthen these bonds, or in the divine words of Plato, he will not "feast the multiform creature (within), whilst the man (the divine principle) he kills with famine". Still while he has a body to nourish, he cannot entirely escape from affirming his egoism and thus causing injury to other beings; but he will do so as far as necessary only. This is one reason why the religious ascetic is enjoined with absolute continence (in thought as well as deed); for in the act of propagation, the sinful desire for life reaches its climax and assures the perpetuation of endless misery through physical existence in the world.

Unless we are prepared to sacrifice truth for a theory it must be clear that vegetarianism can at best be but a means to an end and not the end itself, nor a *summum bonum* with power to usher in an impossible millennium on earth.

In abstaining from animal food the injury we inflict on other beings is minimized, and that is commendable. The vegetarians can therefore say that, whereas we cannot entirely avoid causing some evil, their doctrine is to do the least possible evil to other creatures. If they thus remove the forms of exaggerations around their teachings and let them stand on their own merit, their power for good will be no less potent because they rest on the unshakable foundation of truth.

AMERICAN.

## RENUNCIATION.

**R**ARADA, the great god-sage, thought that the Haryashwas, the sons of Daksha Prajapati, were ill-advised by their father to engage in procreating since he saw in them latent capabilities for far higher things. But he did not unsettle their minds by telling them at once that it was not worth their while to beget children. So he introduced the subject of Self-knowledge, for which he sought to create a strong interest in them, by connecting it with what they then thought to be their supreme duty. He told them that they could not have the power to fulfil the duty laid upon them by their father unless they solved the following problems :

- (1) The extent and nature of the universe.
- (2) The kingdom ruled by the sole monarch.
- (3) The cave from which nobody returns.
- (4) The woman of loose morals. (5) The husband of this unchaste woman. (6) The river flowing in two opposite directions. (7) The wonderful palace formed of twenty-five bricks. (8) The swan with a marvellous history. (9) The wheel of adamant and steel turning incessantly. (10) The injunctions of the father and their scope.

With intense eagerness the Haryashwas listened to Narada and applied themselves closely to the study of his problems. After deep and prolonged contemplation they understood that one's subtle (desire) body is the root of the universe which lasts as long as its cause is not destroyed by *moksha*, that the Self is the one undisputed monarch in the hearts of those who know It. Man is not to be born again if he once attains *moksha* by knowing the Self. Buddhi (intellect) is the woman of loose morals who though wed-

ded to *jiva* associates with things that are not conducive to the latter's true welfare. The husband has been so blinded by her charm that he cannot see what mischief she has been doing him all along. *Maya* is the river that flows in two opposite directions, as it is to her that the dual opposites (correlatives) owe their existence. The twenty-five substances (*tattvas*) are the twenty-five bricks and Brahman, their substratum, is the house built by them. The wonderful swan is the Self whose nature is truly wonderful. Time is the wheel that turns incessantly. The *Shastras* are the father of man because they show him the path of renunciation that leads to eternal bliss.

The spell was broken, and the Haryashwas saw through the mystery of the universe. The childish notion of begetting offspring as the supreme act of religious duty vanished from their minds. They felt themselves superior to the commands of their earthly father and with minds purified from the taint of desire devoted themselves wholly to the meditation of the Self.

A RECLUSE.

*OM.* Ashwalayana approaching the Supreme Lord Brahma said, "Teach me, O Lord, the Supreme *Brahmavidya*, ever cultivated by the sages, secret of all secrets, knowing which the wise, freed from all sins enter into the Being that is beyond all. To him answered the Grandparent of all, "Seek to attain Brahman through Faith, Devotion, and Meditation. Not by work, nor by procreation and wealth, but by renunciation alone can immortality be attained!"—*Kaivalyopanishad*.



## WOMAN IN ANCIENT INDIA

*( Continued from Vol. VI. page 174 )*

**G**ANDHARI: The mother of the Kurus. She was wise, full of Divine Love, versed in the rules of conduct, far-sighted and so devoted to her husband that she kept her own eyes tied up for life because he was blind. She gave her sons instructions on the duties of a king. ( Mahabharata, Udyoga P. Chapter 129 ).

(46) SATYABHAMA: One of the wives of Sri Krishna. She fought with Kuvera, the god of wealth on behalf of her husband, for which he gave her high praise (Bhagavatam).

(47) DAMAYANTI: She was a typical Hindu woman who would gladly share with her husband the worst afflictions in order to be able to serve him in his adversity. Born of royal parents, and brought up in the splendours of fortune, she followed her dethroned husband to the forests where deserted by him and left alone in the midst of beasts of prey, she suffered the most dreadful agonies. Her wandering about in search of her husband, the wisdom and patience with which she carried into effect the plan of discovering him, and making him again the master of his forfeited kingdom—inspire the Hindu woman to this day with the loftiest ideas of duty to her husband. (Mahabharata, Vana Parva ).

(48) PRAVAVATI: She performed religious austerities and used to wear

barks of trees and deer skins. (Ramayana Kishkindhaya Kanda, 50th svarga).

(49) SHAVARI: The disciple of the sage Matanga. She was a hermitess and a great devotee of Rama and attained the end of Yoga. Her meeting with Rama and the pathetic conversation that followed have been touchingly described in the Ramayana (Aranya Kanda 74th svarga).

Being duly worshipped by Shavari, Rama asked her the following questions:

“Have you conquered all the (internal) impediments? Are you gaining in spirituality? Have you subdued your anger? Are your thoughts and deeds under perfect control? Have you attained peace of mind? Have your services to the Guru borne fruit?”

The hermitess honoured of the perfected ones, humbly replied to Rama: “Being blessed with Thy Holy Sight, I have attained to-day the fruition of my *tapas*, my life’s destiny is reached, and my Gurus have been offered the best worship. Having worshipped Thee Who is the greatest of men and Devas, the fulfilment of my life-long austerities has been gained. Being purified by Thy gracious look I must attain immortality through Thy mercy. (Knowing that Thou wouldst come) I gathered for Thee some fruits from the bank of the Pampa.....”

In the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata, there is a section of discourse between Draupadi and Satyabhama continuing through three chapters in which the duties of women have been dwelt upon at length. Among others, keeping account of income and expenditure and the management of the treasury are referred to. This clearly shows that the knowledge of the three R's was not only not denied to women but was regarded as a necessary part of their training.

Many more instances like the above could be cited from the Scriptures which clearly show the attitude of our forefathers towards women and the elevated notions they had about their rights and capabilities, even if they are not regarded as exact descriptions of historical characters of by-gone ages. But coming down to more recent times we see recorded in history the lives of women of great intellectual and moral powers which give the lie to the base and groundless theory assigning a lower place to the other sex.

The following are in evidence :—

(1) WIFE OF KALIDAS : She was so highly educated that she defeated each one of her many suitors in learned discussions and refused him her hand on account of his inferior literary acquirements. This treatment of her suitors well-nigh marred the prospect of her marriage since no one dared approach her for fear of being vanquished and humiliated. Her father seeing this unhappy effect of allowing her to discuss with her suitors, determined to give her in marriage without looking into the qualifications of the bridegroom. The men who were engaged in the work of

choosing the bridegroom had by this time conceived a sort of hatred towards the girl for the insult which she indirectly offered them by refusing all the suitors brought by them; when therefore the father sent them on their duty for the last time, communicating to them his determination, they thought the opportunity of revenge was come. This time they sought not for a man of learning, but for his very opposite. The world is never wanting in idiots. Very soon they found a man cutting down the branch of a tree at the end of which he was himself seated. They at once brought him with them to the father, who without expressing even a wish to know about him, married her to him. After the ceremony was over she at once found out from the vulgar *patois* in which her husband talked that he was quite illiterate. This was more than she could bear. She indignantly told him to get out of the room. Being stung to the quick he retired into the forest determined not to appear before his wife without making himself worthy of her highest respect. He realized his worthy ambition, it is said, by the grace of the goddess Sarasvati, for when he re-appeared to his wife he was quite a new man, the greatest poet that India has ever produced—the immortal Kali Das.

(2) SASIKALA : The daughter of King Vairasimhashana of Gujarat. Under the tuition of a great poet and scholar of Kashmir, Vilhana by name, she mastered in a short time the Sanskrit language and several vernaculars of India.

(3) SILAVATI : Wife of King Bhoja. The king once insulted Kali Das for some misdeed. Kali Das with a heavy



heart went away from the palace. The king was very sorry for the serious turn the event took. Silavati asked him the reason of his sorrow and being told all about Kali Das' misdeed and the insult the king had offered him, she took the brief on behalf of the great poet. She recited two verses composed by herself which rendered into English stand as follows :—

“Better is it that love should not spring at all than it should be suffered to die after so springing. One who is deprived of his eyesight is miserable but not so is he who is born blind.”

“Full of faults, jealous and stigmatised though the moon is and rises to his glory on the decline of his friend ( the sun ), yet he is always dear to Mahadeva. There is no judging of the merits and demerits of one who has come under (your) protection.”

Silavati convinced her husband that he should forgive Kali Das and made him promise that he should comfort Kali Das the next morning.

We learn from the life of king Bhoja that he was a great patron of learning and that many poetesses flourished in his reign by the substantial encouragement they always received from him. Among these are worthy of mention the names of Devi, the potter's wife, the carpenter's wife, the hunter's wife, the lady's maid, and the milkman's daughter. Their poems evince the depth of learning and the great power of observation, wit and intelligence they possessed. That learning was not confined to Brahmins alone is shown by the lives of these cultured ladies.

(4) SAMJOGATA : The daughter of Jayachandra and wife of King Prithu. She was a devotee of God and well versed in the code of morality. She sought her husband's welfare by every possible means and instructed him on ethics at the time of battle. After his death she followed him to the other world by mounting on his funeral pyre.

(5) DEVIMAMATA : The wife of the famous religious poet Tulsi Das who woke him to his spritual life by her inspiring words.

(6) BHAMATI : The learned wife of Vachaspati Misra, the great annotator of the commentaries of Sankaracharya on the Vedanta Sutras. She wrote a commentary on *Kalpa Taru* in such a masterly way that her husband felt glorified by her, and in her honor styled his great work after her name—the *Bhamati Teeka*.

(7) KALYANI DEVI : The sister of Sreeman Madhyacharya and a writer of note, some of whose works can be had to this day.

(8) MAINAVATI : She was the sister of King Vikramaditya and wife of King Gopichandra. She practised with intense devotion the teachings of her Guru Jalandhara. She is said to have attained *Brahmanishtha* or fixedness in the Supreme One (Nathalilamrita, Chapters 18–20).

(9) KING KUMARAPALA'S WIFE : She was learned and devoted to the practice of the Vedic religion.

( To be continued )

VIRAJANANDA.

## NEWS AND NOTES

Mr. COTTON states that the dread and somewhat mysterious disease, known as "kala-azar," is now dying out in Assam, and the number of deaths, caused by it has fallen in the year from 14,199 to 9,012.

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THE cost of the Coronation Durbar at Delhi is at present roughly estimated at twenty lakhs of rupees, a goodly amount of which is expected to be recouped to the State by proceeds from Railway traffic.

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IN an article in the current number of the *Sphere*, Dr. Ronald Ross states that, since the anti-mosquito crusade was started in Havana, mosquitoes have been reduced by 90 per cent; yellow fever has disappeared, and malarial fever has diminished to one-half of what it was.

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THE Viceroy has presented the Indian Museum with valuable collections of dress, headgear, weapons, etc., which were given him from the Manipur hill tribes, the Shan, Chin and Kachin tribes and natives in the vicinity of the Gersoppa Falls and some Brahmaputra stone implements.

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IT was a Bengali youth who first showed the way of proceeding to Japan to learn technical arts at the University of Tokyo. There are at present half a dozen Punjabis, one Hindustani, three Mahrattas and two Bengalis prosecuting their education at the Technical College in the Japanese capital.

AN association of Hindus has been established in Calcutta, the members of which have pledged themselves to use as much as possible articles of indigenous manufacture. Quite a number of shops have cropped up in the native quarter in the course of the last few months, each professing to sell only Indian made goods.

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PROFESSOR FRASER, F. R. S., has been experimenting with bile as an antidote to the venom of serpents and the microbes of diphtheria and other diseases. He reports that the bile of venomous serpents is a better antidote to the venom of snakes than the bile of harmless ones, and this last is better than the bile of man and such animals as the ox, pig or the rabbit, which, by the way, produces a very anti-toxic bile. The bile of one venomous snake may be a better antidote to the poison of another than its own bile.

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THE Russian Scientific Expedition to Tibet, under Lieutenant Kotzloff, which recently returned to Moscow, spent altogether two and a-half years in Central Asia, covering a distance of over 8,000 miles. Astronomical observations were made at 40 different points. A meteorological station was established in Tasidam, and records obtained for 13 successive months. The zoological, botanic and geological collections are extremely interesting, and were brought on the



backs of 50 camels to the frontier station of Urga. From a central region of the Great Gobi Delta, 1,000 geological specimens have been collected. The expedition was not well received by the Tibetan authorities. It was refused admission to Lhasa, and had several skirmishes with the Tibetan guards.

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A WELL-KNOWN classical scholar in Vienna states that he has found a very old MS., giving full particulars of the site of a gold mine, worked by the ancient Egyptians centuries before the Christian era. It seems that the mine, which was full of the precious mineral, was purposely covered over, in order to be hidden from enemies.

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A FURTHER Notification on the subject of the Coronation formally announces that the Coronation procession will follow precisely the same route as the Diamond Jubilee procession. It is also stated that the procession will be on the day after the Coronation ceremony, and not, as was once anticipated, on the day preceding. The Coronation therefore stands fixed for Thursday, the 26th June, and the procession for Friday the 27th.

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MR. WILLIAM MATTHEWS, writing in a Philadelphia paper, declares that nine-tenths of the alleged breakdowns from excessive brain work are due to other causes. The truth is, he says, that no organ of the body is tougher than the brain. Hard work alone, pure and simple—apart from anxieties and fear, from forced or voluntary stinting of the body's needed supply of food or sleep and the mind's need of social intercourse

—does far more to invigorate the brain than to lessen its strength; does more to prolong life than to cut or fray its thread. Mr. Matthews asserts that the lives of the great scholars in ancient and modern times show that a student who takes abundant food, sleep, and exercise at regular hours, sits down to his meals in a pleasant mood, rests half an hour afterwards, recreates himself by frequent rides or walks, and commerce with his fellows, may toil over his books 10 or 12 hours a day, and yet live happily till he reaches fourscore years, or even longer.

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WE are glad to hear that a scheme is on foot for founding a Vanaprastha Ashrama at Muttra, some of the objects of which are:—

'To assist Brahmacharins in their strictly observing the duties of their order.'

'To popularise the ancient system of Vanaprastha.'

'To support and educate the children of widows, and orphans.'

'To preach about the improvement and maintenance of Indian Sciences and Philosophies, Arts and Industries.'

The scheme originated with Pundit Mohan Lal Vishnulal Pandia, retired Prime Minister of Partabgarh State, in Rajputana. We note that a plot of land, 11 bighas in area, has been purchased and that the work of building will soon be undertaken.

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AN interesting lecture on the resources of India was delivered in the India Section of the Society of Arts recently by Professor Wyndham Dunstan, Director of the Scientific Department, Imperial Institute; Lord George Hamilton being

in the chair. Professor Dunstan, having pointed out that the coal-fields of India were inexhaustible, declared that the development of this great industry depended primarily on native labour being organised with consideration and forethought, while next to that came the question of railway rates and factories and dock accommodation. Lord George Hamilton, in winding up the discussion spoke favourably of proposals to establish an Indian School of Mines and to strengthen the Geological Department. The big surpluses Indian finance was showing, which were likely to continue, should be applied to the development of Indian industries, he said, and it was now the policy of the Government in railway matters to look to the proper equipment of the existing lines, rather than to the multiplication of new ones. He agreed that there must be no attempt to apply mining legislation passed for England to the different conditions of India. They must see that there were no unnecessary risks in mines, but they ought not to interfere with women and children finding an occupation to which they had been used for generations.

HEAVEN penetrates to the Depths of all hearts as daybreak illumines the darkest room. We should strive to reflect its light, as two instruments in complete harmony respond to one another.—*Confucius*.

SPIRITUAL thinking is the pioneer that opens the way into the new births, but it must be followed by spiritual *act-ing* on the part of every faculty.—*Leo Virgo*.

A MUSICAL writer states that fine vocalists are rare in countries where fish and meat diets prevail, and that the voice depreciates as families grow rich and increase the amount of meat consumed. Naples and Genoa, where much fish is eaten, give few of Italy's singers; and the sweet voices of Ireland are found in the country, but not in the town. In Norway, too much fish is eaten to produce singers, but Sweden is a land of grain and song. The carnivorous birds croak : grain eating birds sing.

### A WOODLAND TRAGEDY

I see a thrush's feather ; blood drops steep  
The drifted leaves and forest mold.  
I know here was a tragedy as deep  
As any of which Shakespéare told.

—*Alonzo Rice*.

### FREEDOM

I care not who were visions back of me,  
No shadow of their sins on me is shed.  
My will is greater than heredity,  
I am no worm to feed upon the dead.  
My face, my form, my gestures and my voice,  
May be reflections from a race that was.  
But this I know, and knowing it, rejoice,  
I am myself a part of the GREAT CAUSE.  
I am a spirit ! Spirit would suffice,  
If rightly used, to set a chained world free.  
Am I not stronger than a mortal vice,  
That crawls the length of some ancestral tree?

—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*.

THERE is no saviour in the world except Truth.—*Buddha*.